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by Shimizu

SPECIFICATION

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

BE IT KNOWN THAT WE, Syuji Takada, a citizen of Japan residing at Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, Japan and Yasuhiro Ooba, a citizen of Japan residing at Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, Japan have invented certain new and useful improvements in

COMMON BUFFER MEMORY CONTROL APPARATUS

of which the following is a specification : -

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

COMMON BUFFER MEMORY CONTROL APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a common buffer memory control apparatus such as an ATM switching system, and more particularly to a common buffer memory control apparatus applied to a message communication service in which message data formed of a plurality of cells is transmitted.

2. Description of the Related Art

An ATM switching system operated in an Asynchronous Transfer Mode is used in a broad-band integrated services digital network (B-ISDN). In such an ATM switching system, a switching apparatus using a common buffer memory carries out a routing operation for cells in an ATM network.

A conventional switching apparatus using the common buffer memory controls, using address chains, a read/write operation of the common buffer memory. Fig. 1 shows a conventional switching apparatus using the common buffer memory.

Referring to Fig. 1, the switching apparatus has a multiplexing unit (MUX) 31, a common buffer memory 32, an address pointer 33, a demultiplexing unit (DEMUX) 34, a routing information decoder (RTGDEC) 35, a writing address memory 36, a reading address memory 37, an output route number decoder 38 and an output route number counter 39. The address pointer 33 specifies reading and writing points in the common buffer memory 32.

The writing address memory 36 has memory areas WA-1 to WA-n each of which corresponds to one of output routes. The reading address memory 37 has memory areas RA-1 to RA-n each of which corresponds

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Cells input from respective input lines (input-1~input-n) are multiplexed by the multiplexing unit 33 and output to the common buffer memory 32 cell by cell. The multiplexing unit 31 extracts routing information stored in a header portion of each cell. The routing information is then supplied to the routing information decoder 35. The routing information decoder 35 decodes the routing information and specifies a writing address memory area WA-i corresponding to an output route number i obtained by decoding the routing information.

The common buffer memory 32 stores a cell received from the multiplexing unit 31 at an address specified by the address pointer 33. In addition, when the next cell for the same output route is received, the address pointer 33 outputs an address at which the cell should be stored to the writing address memory area WA-i so that the contents of the writing address memory area WA-i is updated to the new address.

The respective read address memory areas

The respective read address memory areas

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reading control operation for cells of each of
message data items can be simplified. In addition,
the handling operation of the message data between
the ATM layer and the upper layer can be rapidly and
5 easily executed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other objects, features and advantages of
the present invention will be apparent from the
10 following description when read in conjunction with
the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a
conventional switching apparatus using a common
buffer memory;

15 Fig. 2 is a block diagram illustrating a
switching apparatus, using a common buffer memory,
according to an embodiment of the present invention;
and

Fig. 3 is a flowchart illustrating a
20 procedure of a control process for the common buffer
memory.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

A description will be given of a common
25 buffer memory control apparatus according to an
embodiment of the present invention.

A switching apparatus, using a common
buffer memory, according to an embodiment of the
present invention is formed as shown in Fig. 2.
30 Referring to Fig. 2, input lines 10-#1 to 10-#n are
provided to the switching apparatus. The switching
apparatus has a multiplexing unit 11, a cell
determination unit 12, a common buffer memory 13, an
address pointer 14, a message queue 15, a
35 demultiplexing unit 16 and a common buffer memory
control apparatus 20. The switching apparatus is
connected with lines 17-#1 to 17-#n. The common

buffer memory control apparatus 20 has a free block searching unit 21, a free block management table 22, a block management table 23, a user management table 24 and an address management table 25. An external
5 input/output device 30 is coupled to the common buffer memory control apparatus 20.

The common buffer memory 13 is divided into blocks BLK-1 to BLK-n each of which is controlled to read and write cells.

10 The free block management table 22 areas 22-1 to 22-n each of which corresponds to one of the blocks BLK-1 to BLK-n of the common buffer memory 13. Each of the areas 22-1 to 22-n is used to store state information indicating whether a corresponding
15 block of the common buffer memory 13 is free or used. The block management table 23 has areas 23-1 to 23-n each of which corresponds to one of the blocks BLK-1 to BLK-n. The areas 23-1 to 23-n stores write addresses. The user management table 24 has areas
20 24-1 to 24-n used to store identification numbers of users. The address management table 25 has areas 25-1 to 25-n each of which corresponds to one of the blocks BLK-1 to BLK-n. The areas 25-1 to 25-n are used to store last write addresses.

25 The common buffer memory 13 is controlled in accordance with a procedure as shown in Fig. 3.

Cells received through the input lines 10-#1~10-#n are multiplexed by the multiplexing unit 11 and successively supplied to the cell
30 determination unit 12 one by one. The cell determination unit 12 determines, based on additional information in a cell, whether the cell is a cell at the head of message data, a cell in a mid-portion of the message data or a cell at the
35 tail of the message data (see S1-1 and S1-2 in Fig. 3). If it is determined that the received cell is the cell of the head of the message data, the cell

The free block searching unit 21 searches the areas 22-1 to 22-n of the free block management table 22 for an area storing the state information indicating that a corresponding block is free in order to select a block BLK-i of the common buffer memory 13 which is free, when receiving the signal indicating that the cell of the head of the message data has been received. Hereinafter, the block of the common buffer 13 which is free is referred to as a free block. When the free block is detected, the free block searching unit 21 changes the state information in the area 22-i, corresponding to the block BLK-i of the common buffer memory 13, of the free block management table 22 from "FREE" to "USED" (see S2 in Fig. 3).

The area 23-i of the block management table 23 outputs the head address of the block BLK-i of the common buffer memory 13 to the address pointer 14. The address pointer 14 specifies a write address using the address supplied from the

5 In addition, the address pointer 14
outputs a write address at which the next received
cell should be written to the area 25-i of the
address management table 25. The area 25-i of the
address management table 25 stores the new address
0 as a last write address (see in Fig. 3).

If it is determined that a received cell is the cell at the tail of the message data, the block BLK-i of the common buffer memory 13 in which the message data is stored is detected with reference to the user management table 24. All the

contents of the block BLK-i are stored in the message queue 15 (see S8 in Fig. 3). The block BLK-i is opened so as to be free. The state information of the area 22-i, corresponding to the block BLK-i of the common buffer memory 13, of the free block management table 22 is changed to "FREE" indicating that the block is free (see S9 in Fig. 3). As a result, the block BLK-i of the common buffer memory 13 can be used for other message data after this.

The operation described above is executed in a case where there is neither lost cells nor erroneously inserted cells. Even if the head or tail of the message data is out of order caused by the loss cells and/or the erroneously inserted cells, the address control is simplified as cells of a single message data item are stored together in a single block of the common buffer memory 13. As a result, the handling operation for the message data between the ATM layer and the upper layer can be quickly and easily executed.

Thus, when the message data read out from the common buffer memory 13 is written in the message queue 15, various types of controls can be executed in accordance with abnormality of the message data. The message data may be overwritten in the message queue 15. The message data may be canceled and an error message and a retransmission request may be returned to the sender. The message data may be written in the message queue 15 and processed for protection. That is, processes suitable for the abnormality of the message data can be easily executed, so that the quality of the service can be improved.

In the above embodiment, after the cell at the head of the message data is received, the free block searching unit 21 searches for a free block of the common buffer memory 13. The free block

searching unit 21 may search for a free block of the common buffer memory 13 before the cell at the head of the message data is received. In this case, cell can be further quickly written in the common buffer memory 13.

In addition, the number of blocks BLK-1~BLK-n of the common buffer memory 13 and the length of each of the blocks may be fixed. However, they may be also controlled based on traffic state information supplied from the external input/output device 30. In this case, the memory area of the common buffer memory 13 can be efficiently used.

Further, the common buffer memory 13 may be divided into a plurality of block groups each of which includes a plurality of blocks. Blocks of the same block group have the same length. Blocks of different block groups have different lengths. An address at which the cell at head of the message data should be stored is assigned to each block. Each of the block groups is independently searched for a free block. In this case, the memory area of the common buffer memory 13 can be efficiently used and the memory can be quickly accessed.

The cell determination unit 12 may controls the length of each block of the common buffer memory 13 based on information about the amount of message data extracted from a cell transmitted at the start of the message communication. In this case, if the amount of message data actually received is less than the length of the block controlled as described above, the remaining area of the block is opened so as to be capable of being used in the following message communication. The message management efficiently using resources can be executed. In a case where cells in the mid-portion of the message data are received, in a case where the cell at the head of

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